Writing for the Journal of Nursing Education: Key Questions for Authors

The number of manuscripts reporting nursing education research efforts outside of North America submitted to the Journal of Nursing Education (JNE) has increased significantly. While such information is exciting, as it conveys heightened interest in nursing education research, there are considerations authors should take into account when submitting a manuscript to JNE, particularly when reporting research efforts from outside North America.

Information about how to write for a journal with a broad reach is not new. Editors of several journals have highlighted the challenges of submitting a manuscript that reports results of investigative efforts from countries outside of the journal’s home country (Dahlberg & Morse, 2009; Holl, 2010; Holland, 2005; Morse & Dahlberg, 2009; Rezaei-Adaryani, 2012; Turale, 2010; Watson, Annells, Amella, & Wong, 2007). These challenges bear repeating for authors considering submission to JNE, as it is critical that nursing education scientists move forward the science of nursing education expeditiously. The following questions are offered in an attempt to address the most common issues associated with writing for an audience primarily based in North America. They are relevant irrespective of geographic location and the author’s native language.

Who Is My Audience?
Authors need to consider that the readership of JNE is primarily North American, and thus, authors should consider including information about the context of the study. Context is critical, as students are educated differs by country. Authors are challenged to present context in such a manner that the reader’s unfamiliarity with the context or the topic is addressed (Holland, 2005), thus making the manuscript more meaningful to the reader.

What Are the Journal Guidelines?
Although this question may seem inconsequential, Turale (2010) reinforced this point three times in her editorial. Irrespective of the author’s country of origin, it is critical that journal guidelines are followed, as there can be significant ramifications if not followed. Editors and reviewers know immediately when this condition has not been met. For example, submitting a manuscript following a citation style other than that of the American Psychological Association highlights that the author has not reviewed JNE’s author guidelines. Although this may seem like a minor infraction, such lack of attention alerts the editor to consider the presence of more significant infractions related to the work being reported.

How Thorough Is My Review of the Literature?
To make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge addressing nursing education, authors must be able to demonstrate that they have a global command of extant literature. Authors should include citations that convey their appreciation of the global nature of an issue when appropriate. As an author, conveying an understanding of what is known about a topic enhances the credibility of one’s work. For example, JNE frequently receives manuscripts from around the world on topics, issues, and studies that are available in the extant nursing literature and with which JNE authors and readers are already familiar. Consequently, not only does such an occurrence limit the contribution of the author’s work, but it also increases the likelihood of it being rejected.

Have I Taken Differences in Terminology Into Account?
As English is the language of science, authors for whom English is not their native language must undertake extra steps to write a successful manuscript. Special attention should be paid to spelling conventions, as the spelling of some words differ by country (Dahlberg & Morse, 2009). Here’s a simple example: In the United States, the word labor is spelled as is, but according to British conventions, it is spelled labour. Paying attention to such details is critical. Terminology also plays a role in the presentation of findings, as words that exist in one language may not have a counterpart in another language. Authors are then challenged with how to best convey their findings so that an audience who is not familiar with their language can still benefit from their work.

How Does What I Am Reporting Contribute to the English Language Database About My Topic?
This question is intimately related to the previous question regarding the command of extant literature and, in my opinion, is the most important question authors need to consider. Although JNE
publishes reports of nursing education research conducted outside the United States, it is critical that these works extend what is already known about the topic. Depending on the state of nursing education research development in a country, this condition may be difficult to meet. Authors are challenged to consider whether their work is limited to their own area of the world or will contribute to a more global understanding of a nursing education issue.

Given that the readership of JNE is primarily based in the United States, authors writing about nursing education research in other parts of the world would be wise to consider how relevant their findings will be to this audience. In other words, authors should consider including how findings may be applicable to a U.S. audience in the discussion of their findings. Paraphrasing Holl (2010), authors need to ask themselves, “What conclusions from my study would be relevant and novel to nurse education researchers working in North America?”

Conversely, authors may wish to contrast “the meanings of national or local concepts with the meanings of similar concepts in the American or British literature, thus extending their knowledge” (Dahlberg & Morse, 2009, p. 2). For example, understanding the meaning and interpretation of a term, such as fidelity as it relates to simulation from a global perspective, could make a significant contribution to the extant literature.

Authors considering publishing in JNE also need to consider the type of research that has been conducted. Holl (2010) stated, “Small-scale, single-site studies, which are also valuable to inform local restoration [Editor note: the author is an environment scientist, hence the use of the term restoration] efforts, are usually more suitable for regional than international journals” (p. 136). This admonition is particularly relevant to nursing education scientists, given the need for more complex research methods that build on existing descriptive work. The challenge for all authors is to ensure that they extend what is known about their topic and not just duplicate what is already known, although certain topics may be interesting to specific areas of the world. In other words, what may be novel in one country may be common practice in another country.

Although we are happy to receive manuscripts detailing nursing education research conducted outside the United States, authors need to consider how their work moves forward the science of nursing education within their country, the United States, and globally. The preceding questions have been framed to assist authors in determining whether JNE is the most appropriate venue for their work.

References
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